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MR. TAGGART'S

ADDRESS TO HIS CONSTITUENTS

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Taggart, Samuel,
Mr. Taggart's address to his constituents,
1813]

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MR. TAGGART'S

ADDRESS TO HIS CONSTITUENTS,

ON THE SUBJECT OF IMPRESSMENTS.

To the Citizens of Massachusetts, particularly of the district which I have the honor to represent.

FELLOW CITIZENS—

IN a situation of the country different from the present, I should not have given either you or myself the trouble of this address. But in the present season of peril, involved as we are in a war which, how far it may prove ruinous to our best interests as a nation it is impossible, at this time, to foresee, standing as I do in that public station in which your partiality has repeatedly placed me, I thought it a duty to present you with a few observations on the state of the nation. It is well known that I have uniformly opposed the present war, as well as all those previous steps which have led to it. Whatever was either the nature or extent of the injuries we had received from the different belligerents, I viewed them as growing out of the present war in Europe; a war probably both in its extent and in the great events and important consequences of which it has been productive, unparalleled in modern times, and that these injuries would cease of course, on the return of peace. Our neutral situation gave us many advantages, and, although we suffered some partial inconveniences from the mutual encroachments of the different belligerents, I considered it much better to bear with those partial and temporary evils, than to rush into a conflict of which we could calculate neither the extent, the consequences to our independence and liberties, nor the duration. My present intention is not to enter on an investigation of, either the justice or policy of the present war, or to indulge in conjectures about its probable issue. Some of my ideas on this subject, submitted at the close of the last session, are now before the public. How far these conjectures have been verified by facts, is obvious to those who have paid particular attention to the passing events of the last campaign. My observations will be confined to one single point, viz. the impressment of seamen, every other matter in dispute between the two nations being, in the view of the President, so far removed out of the way as to oppose no in-

surmountable obstacle to an amicable adjustment; as appears from the message and documents communicated to congress at the commencement of the session. It is not my intention to vindicate the British practice of impressing seamen. If that can be done, it is the business of those who practice it. I mean to speak of the practice as it is, at least so far as the United States are affected by it, nought to extenuate, and nought to set down in malice. It is a vulgar error industriously circulated by some, that Great Britain claims the right of impressing American citizens. She claims no such right, and has invariably professed a willingness to release such of that character as may have been impressed, on exhibiting proof of their citizenship. She claims the right of demanding and impressing her own seamen, when found on board of neutral merchant ships. The controversy on this subject between the two governments, seems therefore to be circumscribed within very narrow limits. The United States say they don't want to protect or claim British seamen in their service. Great Britain says she wants no seamen from us only those who are her own subjects. One would naturally suppose that no adequate cause of war, or any insuperable obstacle to an amicable settlement of difficulties, could possibly arise on such a nice point as this. There may be still some grounds of dispute on the question who are to be considered as American citizens. Neither Great Britain or any other European nation, I believe allows the right of expatriation. Regulations on this subject, particularly with regard to seafaring people, are particularly strict. In France under the former dynasty, the seaman who, even in a time of peace, should abandon the service of his country without leave, and engage in the employment of a foreign merchant, was liable not only to be reclaimed by force, but also subjected to punishment, and I know not that these regulations are altered, or that she pays any regard to an act of naturalization by a foreign government. In the United States all foreigners are considered as citizens who have complied with the provisions of our naturalization law. As it respects seamen, however, this can be an object of very little consequence. A foreigner coming into this country in the character of a seaman, and continuing to follow the seas as his constant or usual employment, cannot become a citizen according to the true intent and meaning of the present naturalization law of the United States, which requires five years residence in the country previous to his becoming naturalized. There is only one class to which this can apply, and if there are any of this description, I believe their number to be extremely small, I mean such as have resided in the country a

sufficient length of time to become citizens, and afterwards betake themselves to the sea for an employment.

It is therefore a mistaken idea that this practice is either novel or peculiar to Great Britain. The regulations of France, we have seen to be peculiarly severe on the subject, as appears from several edicts issued from time to time, from the year 1650, if not from periods still more early, down to the era of the republic. The same practice has been recognised by standing regulations of Great Britain, at least as far back as the year 1640. Authorities to that effect have been recently laid before the public, a citation of which would protract these remarks beyond their intended limits. During the present war in Europe, this practice has been probably more common than in any former period. The reason, without doubt, is that during this period, a greater number of British seamen have found means to shelter themselves under a neutral flag. This was the first time in which it affected the United States as an independent nation. That they have been more affected by it than any other nation has arisen from their speaking the same language, and from such a similarity of manners and customs, more striking perhaps among seafaring people, than among those of any other description as renders it almost impossible to discriminate. Had either France or Spain been the neutral which was carrying on a lucrative commerce, the English sailor could not have taken refuge on board their ships, without being liable to almost instant detection. But on board of an American ship it is almost impossible to distinguish him from one of our native seamen. It is natural for a seaman to prefer peace to war, the quiet pursuits of commerce on board of a neutral, to the dangers incident to the service on board a ship of the line or a frigate. This preference given to the service, connected with that flourishing state of the American commerce, which enabled the merchant to give such high wages to seamen, held out such powerful inducements to British sailors, as prevailed upon vast numbers to abandon their country and to seek employment on board of American ships. For several years previous to our adoption of the restrictive system, which gave a check to commercial enterprise, the number of foreign seamen, principally British, who have been in the American employ, have been computed to average not less than 20,000. It cannot be denied that the withdrawing of so large a number of a class of people, necessary in the present situation of the country to her very existence as an independent nation, was such a serious injury to Great Britain as, if continued, must greatly diminish her power, lessen her security, and even put her safety at hazard; an evil which probably there is no

nation in the world which, situated as she is, would not take some measures to prevent. If therefore the question should be asked why she resorted to the practice of impressing seamen from on board our ships, the answer is a plain one. It is because thousands of her seafaring subjects are on board of our vessels, to her manifest injury and damage, sheltered under American protections, and, for that reason, claimed as American citizens; and there is no arrangement whereby she can reclaim them in any other way. I do not mention this to justify the practice of impressment, but to show what that practice is, and what has given rise to it. It is impracticable from any documents within my reach, to ascertain the number of seamen who have been actually impressed from on board of American ships, since the commencement of the present war in Europe, and, could that difficulty be removed, a still greater would arise, in determining what proportion of these are *bona fide* Americans. Various circumstances however, have induced me to believe that the number, particularly of real Americans, has been by far overrated. As a general rule the apparent magnitude of objects increases as you approach them, and diminishes in proportion as the distance from them is increased. The subject of impressment has a different effect upon the optics. Viewed at a distance it appears to be an object of vast magnitude but diminishes in proportion as you approach it. A natural and obvious enquiry is to what parts or sections of the United States do these multitudes of seamen belong? Where are their friends, connections and families, from which they have been torn, and for which so much sympathy has been expressed? We cannot expect to find them in Kentucky, Tennessee, Ohio, or any where west of the Allegany. We will naturally expect to find them in the seaports, in places where there is the most commerce and navigation. But do we find those numerous distressed families and connections there? Enquire of the best informed men in those places, where you would naturally expect to hear the greatest complaints, and you can hardly obtain information of half a dozen, where the proportion of the estimated number would be at least 1000. This circumstance alone, affords strong presumptive evidence at least, if not conclusive proof, that a great majority of these impressed seamen are foreigners, who, when they arrive in the country excite little interest, and when they are withdrawn, either by impressment or otherwise, leave no vacuum. One of the first things to be expected in an application for the discharge of a real American seaman, would be a statement, authenticated by proper testimony, of the part of the country to which he belonged, particularly the place of his birth, where he was

best known, and where his connections, if he had any, resided. Such a statement, properly authenticated, especially when found to coincide with the narrative of the party himself, who claimed the release, would be one of the strongest evidences of his being an American. There are few if any instances, of applications made in this way, which have proved unsuccessful. How far this has been attended to in such applications will be seen as we proceed in the examination of the documents. The evidence principally relied on as proof, that a seaman is an American, is a protection, a document granted in the first instance by a collector of one of the ports, a notary public, or a consul, or vice consul in a foreign port. The loose manner in which these protections are, in the first instance granted, the extensive forgeries of these papers, which is known to be practised, and is neither restrained or punished by any law, and the common practice of buying, selling, and bartering them among sailors, has rendered them documents on which very little reliance is to be placed. A man or it may be a dozen men at a time, apply to a collectors office for protections, as American sailors, professing themselves to be citizens of the United States. Another man equally unknown comes forward and swears to the whole dozen, or whatever is the number, it may be, in the expectation of a similar return, while, as is probably the case at times, both applicants, and witnesses, have, within a few short months, it may be weeks or even days, landed for the first time on our shores. The forms of law being in this way complied with, a protection is granted as a matter of course. Where is the court of law which would award a plantiff a single dollar on no better evidence than this? Several perjuries of this kind have been detected, and there exists but little doubt but many more have been committed. It is to be lamented that such is the state of morals in our own as well as other countries, that oaths, particularly of a certain kind, are but little regarded. The smuggler who would neither swear away the life nor property of another in a court of justice, will, many times, hestitate but little, to defraud the revenue, by swearing falsely in a custom house. It is I believe an incontestible fact, that the oaths prescribed by law for the purpose of obtaining protections, are frequently but little regarded among sailors. When perjuries of this kind are detected there exists no law either of the United States or of the individual states to punish them. This has been attempted in some of the states without effect. When therefore these protections are relied on as the principal evidence of citizenship, and when it is a matter of public notoriety that European sailors are furnished with these documents, indiscriminately with

our native seamen, and the protections themselves are frequently mere matters of bargain and sale among sailors, it affords very strong presumptive evidence at least, that a great proportion of these impressed seamen, although furnished with American protections, are in reality foreigners; at least it is not strange that little credit should be attached to them by the British government. And as neither a boarding officer from a ship of war, or a press gang are very nice in making distinctions, it is not strange if an American should be sometimes impressed, instead of an European. But it is time to proceed to an examination of the documents. I am sensible that the subject is a dry one; it is only the importance of the facts that will afford any adequate compensation for the perusal of the details. But as they are particularly interesting at this time, on account of the present situation of the country, I hope this will be a sufficient inducement to give them a candid and impartial examination, although but little pleasure should be derived from the perusal.

I have not deemed it necessary to be very particular in the examination of any documents on the subject, of an older date than that communicated January 19, 1805. Indeed I have been able to lay my hands on but one of an older date, and that is a report from the department of state, communicated March 11, 1798, which I have given somewhat of an attentive perusal. But it gives no satisfactory information of the number which had been impressed at that time. The first item contained in it consists of the protests of 44 different sea captains relative to impressments from vessels under their command, to the number of 79 seamen, of these 35 are said to be Americans; 23 unknown to what nation they belonged; 9 British subjects, and the residue of different foreign nations. Only 16 were said to be furnished with protections, about an equal number without protections, and a majority of the whole not known whether they had or had not protections. Nine of the number were impressed by French vessels. A second item contains the returns of the collectors of the several ports, but principally from those of New York and Philadelphia, viz. 60 by the collector of Philadelphia, 120 by Mr. Lamb and Mr. Sands, collectors in succession of the port of New York, and 11 from other collectors. In the returns of the collector of Philadelphia, only 11 are stated to be American citizens, and the remainder part British, part of several neutral nations, such as Swedes, Danes, Frenchmen, Dutchmen and Prussians, and part unknown. Besides these, mention is made of two vessels, one captured by the French, and the other by the English, in which all the hands were taken out. Of the 120 returned by the successive col-

lectors of New York, 48 are said to be Americans, 30 to be British subjects, and the remainder either unknown, or of different European nations. Some of these were detained only a few days; 22 of the impressments were by French vessels. Of the 11 returned by the other collectors, 2 were said to be Englishmen, 5 to be detained only three days, the remainder no remarks. N. B. These returns of the collectors includes the principal part of the same cases contained in the protests of the captains. In the years 1796–97 a large British fleet lay in the West Indies, and, for a time, impressments were frequent in that quarter. But the interposition of Mr. Talbot, agent for the relief of American seamen, and Mr. Craig, his assistant, 103 seamen were discharged, and the practice of impressment in that quarter, in a great measure stopped. How great a number was left, was probably unknown. Of the real Americans, the number seems not to have been great. I find also two lists of applications which had been transferred to agents in London, amounting together to 401. For one of which application had been made for their release by Mr. Pinkney, and the other by Mr. King, successive ministers at London. The business was transferred to Mr. Lenox, agent for the relief of prisoners, who states that a number, he neither states their names, nor how many, had been released prior to his application, and from the same name occurring several times, he was uncertain whether they were the names of the same or of different individuals. The result of Mr. Lenox's application is not stated, nor how many had been before liberated on the application of Messrs. Pinkney and King. But it follows, that this number 401, deducting therefrom the number released prior to Mr. Lenox's application, and those released on his application, contain a list of all the cases then known to the agent at London. It is impossible from this document to come at any thing like an exact result. Nor is it material towards making an estimate of the number who may be detained at this time. Because whatever that number might be, so far as it was known, it was brought forward, and the names included in succeeding applications. The only point of view in which it would be important, would be to ascertain the number which had been discharged prior to that period.

As the document of January 19. 1805, begins, as it were, a new era on the subject, as it is the first which attempts any thing like a list of impressments; and, together with subsequent documents, comprises all the information to be obtained. I have examined them with a considerable degree of attention, and drawn such conclusions as appeared to me fairly to follow.

This report was made to congress January 19, 1805, pursuant to a resolution of the house of representatives of the 19th of the preceding November. The first item consists of a list of the names of 218 seamen, for whose release application had been made, in the first instance to the department of state. So far as these instances have any date, they extend from January 1st, 1798 to October 14, 1804; 79 have a date assigned, 139 without date.

The second item contains a list of 1538 cases in which application had been made to the board of admiralty, for the release of seamen by George W. Irvine, Esq. United States agent at London. These applications were made between the beginning of March 1803, and the latter end of August 1804. Of these applications the result is given. This is the commencement of that number, which has, from time to time, accumulated to 6257, of a number which has been so often printed in staring capitals for the purpose of creating an excitement, and to impress the public with the belief that this number at least, of real Americans was at this moment forcibly detained on board the British fleet. I have not examined particularly whether all, or what proportion of the preceding number of 218 is included in this list of 1538. Some of them undoubtedly are, and by comparing dates, a great proportion of them may be so included. It is however perfectly immaterial to the present enquiry, whether they are or are not so included, because all the names so reported are either contained in this or in some later list of applications, as a matter of course. Posterior to Mr. Talbot's agency in the West Indies, during the year 1797, although consular agents in Jamaica, reported certain cases of impressment to the department of state, yet with the exception of five instances of discharge, made by the commanding officers of the Jamaica station, as soon as he became acquainted with the circumstances, we find no mention made of any discharged, only such as were through the instrumentality of the agent at London. These applications, whether made in the first instance to the department of state, or by friends at home communicated to that department, or made to consuls or vice consuls in foreign ports, by either the parties, their friends, or the captains of the ships from whence taken, were, in the last resort, transmitted to the agent in London, and through him, application was made in behalf of his government, to that of Great Britain. The idea of swelling the number of impressments, by representing the lists contained in these documents as the mere returns of one agent, and reasoning in this way that if the returns of a single agent amount to 6000 and upward, how great must be the amount of the whole;

has no foundations in fact. By adopting this mode of reasoning, and multiplying impressments in this way, we may increase the amount to 20,000, or to any number of thousands on which a fertile imagination may choose to fix. The truth is that the agent at London was the sole agent in this business. To his office the principal part of the applications were transmitted in the first instance, and those originally made at other places were transmitted there in the last resort, and we have no evidence that information has been received by any department, of the impressment of a single individual whose name is not included in some of these lists.

These 1538 applications are not to be considered as a statement of the precise number of impressments of which information had been obtained. It relates to the number of applications made at different times, and is made out in this way. Application is made at a particular time for the release of a certain number of seamen whose names are mentioned. A part of the number is discharged or ordered to be discharged, and the release of the remainder, for certain reasons either delayed or refused. The application is renewed and their names again presented a second, and it may be a third or fourth time, connected with a number of new applications. This course is continued until a release is either obtained or the application abandoned. On every renewal of the application the name is reinserted, and this goes to swell the list. For example we find the name of William Brown attached to Nos. 258, 1057, 1237—William Bond Nos. 578, 1104, 1143, 1265—John Barlow Nos. 1160, 1189, 1277, 1475—John Dunn Nos. 1289, 1407, 1500, 1534—that these numbers relate to the same individual, and not to others of the same name appears from this, that where different individuals of the same name occur, a note of distinction, such as 1st, 2d, 3d &c. is used. There are several William Browns so distinguished, but these numbers are affixed to the same William Brown, and so of the others. In the document under consideration we have a list of 1235 names alphabetically arranged. Every name in the list of 1538 applications is included in that of 1235. In 203 instances I find the same person numbered more than once, in 63 more than twice, in 21 more than three times and two names occur attached to five numbers each. It is impossible to ascertain how much the numbers in some of the lists are swelled in this way, without more minute attention than I have leisure to bestow. Probably some of them one fourth, or it may be nearly or quite one third. In 185 instances mention is made of the city or town to which the person impressed was said to belong, and in 580 other cases the state merely is noticed. In 520 instances the time

of impressment is mentioned although frequently with no more precision than merely to notice the year; and in 344 cases notice is taken of the place or particular quarter of the world in which it happened. In something more than one half of the cases no mention whatever is made of the place to which the parties belonged; in a fraction more than one third either the day, month or year of the impressment is mentioned, and in something less than one fourth, notice is taken of the place. In those cases where the place is mentioned there occur comparatively but a few instances in which it could have been prevented, had even the broad principle of the flag protecting all who sail under it been adopted. Of the whole number 344, not more than 8 or 10 were impressed at sea, or while in the immediate prosecution of their voyage. Including those impressed in the channel and in several coves, roads, rivers, and harbours, the number was about 50, of the remainder 93 were impressed at London, 34 at Liverpool, and of the residue part in other British European ports, and part in Jamaica, Barbadoes, and the other West India Islands, and in other places from one to two, three, and four in a place. In 435 instances the name of the ship from which the men were impressed is mentioned. In some instances two, three and four were taken out of the same ship. It would have been an important piece of information, had it been stated in this, as it is in some other documents, what proportion of these impressments were from American and what from British vessels, because in cases where American sailors went voluntarily on board of British merchant ships, and were impressed from them, it could not be complained of as a violation of the American flag. As, for the most part, no other information is given on this subject, than merely to state the name of the ship, I am not sufficiently conversant in vocabularies of this kind to know the national character of a ship merely by its name. Some however are so plainly designated by their names that their national character cannot be mistaken, particularly where they are expressly said to belong to *London, Hull, Shields, &c. or* designated as *Colliers,* or to have such names as *Tippo Saib, British King, Royal Charlotte, Duke of Kent, Dover Castle, &c.* I find 42 instances of impressments from ships plainly characterised to be British by their names, four from French vessels, and five from a Prussian. So far as we can judge from other documents which I shall presently bring in review, in which the national character of the vessel is particularly mentioned, the proportion of impressments from British ships must be much greater. An abstract of the result of these applications is as follows.

Whole number of applications		1538
Of these are said to be original applications		1232
Duplicate applications		306
Of these had been discharged or ordered to be discharged		437
Not on board the ship specified		105
On board of ships on a foreign station		22
Ship on board of which they are said to be lost		6
Ship on board of which they are said to be not in commission		3
Deserted		13
Drowned or dead		2
Applications unanswered		163
Refused to be discharged,	Because they had no documents	383
	Because their documents said to be insufficient	210
	Because they had voluntarily enlisted	120
	Because married in Great Britain	17
	Because alledged to be British subjects	49
	Because said to be prisoners of war	2
	Because they do not appear to have been impressed	6
		1538

The documents said to be insufficient, are of various kinds, such as certificates of naturalization, protections from consuls and vice consuls, and notarial affidavits, made either in the United States or in Great Britain. To avoid repetition in every abstract, I merely state documents insufficient, without expressing any opinion of their validity, only that they are considered as inadequate by the British government.

In the same report from the department of state, we have a communication made by Mr. Savage, consul at Jamaica, of 88 cases of impressment in the West Indies; 13 of whom appear to have had the customary protections; 62 claim to be Americans, and a few who were unfurnished with protections appear to exhibit other proof. I find an account of the discharge of 5 of this number, by the commanding officer on the Jamaica station, which, with two others, under different circumstances, are the only instances that I have met with of discharges in any other way than through the agent at London, since Mr. Talbot's mission to the West Indies in 1797. A part of these 88 are included in the grand list of 1538; how many I have not ascertained, nor, according to an observation already made, is it material.

The next communication which I find on the subject of impressments, is a report from the department of state of March 6, 1806, pursuant to a resolution of the house of representatives of January 6, preceding. In the letter which accompanies this report, it is stated that the aggregate amount of impressments, previous to that time, since the commencement of the wars in Europe, was 2273, and that it was not easy to

distinguish with accuracy, how many of these were citizens of the United States. This report gives the names of 913 seamen, said to have been impressed, but does not furnish the means of ascertaining how many of this number are original, and how many only duplicates of former applications. All however are included in the total of 2273. I am unable to discover from the documents how this number is made out. 913 added to 1538, makes an excess of 178; added to 1232, the number of original applications, it leaves a deficit of 128. If we add 503, the only number which it would seem could fairly be added, as that was the sum total of the applications, the deficiency will be still greater. That total must therefore be made out by the bringing forward of some number not stated in the documents, of which we must be contentedly ignorant. The number 913, is divided in the report into the following items: No. 1, contains a statement of 503 cases, in which application had been made for a release between September 1, 1804, and May 18, 1805, with the result. These are not numbered as in the former document; no information is given how many of them are duplicate applications, or included in the preceding report of January 19, 1805, nor do I possess the means of ascertaining with precision the place which they occupy in the grand number of 6257. No mention is made in the document, either of the part of the United States to which they belonged, or of the place where they were impressed. In 221 instances the time of impressment is stated. The principal part of these dates are in 1802, 3, 4 and 5, but some as early as 1798. More than half of them are sufficiently early to have been included in the last report, and to occupy the place of duplicate applications in this. No abstract is given of the report. I have taken some pains to collect one from the details, which, although possibly it may not be in every punctilio correct, I believe contains no very material error.

Whole number		503
Discharged, or ordered to be discharged		127
On board of ships of foreign stations		38
Not found on board of the ships in which said to be detained		21
Unknown in what ship they are serving		3
Deserted		3
Applications unanswered		58
Refused to be discharged,	Because they had no documents	112
	Because their documents insufficient	33
	Because British subjects, either without or with spurious protections	43
	Because sent on board for mutinous conduct	5
	Because released from a French prison	1
	Because exchanged as an English prisoner of war	1

Refused to be discharged,	Because they appear not to be Americans	3
	Because married in Great Britain	1
	Because they had voluntarily entered	38
	No reason assigned	6
		503

No. 2, is a statement of 363 applications made, in the first instance to the department of state, and not before reported to the house of representatives, nor included in the returns of the American agent at London. These are of course included in some other list of applications. About one half of these are dated. Like the former, the dates are principally in 1803, 4 and 5. Of these 155 were furnished with protections, 102 without protections, of 32 it is not stated whether they had or had not protections, 35 appeared to be British subjects, 5 claimed to be Americans without exhibiting any proof, 6 had lost their protections, 5 had voluntarily enlisted, and 18 were composed of Swedes, Portuguese, Prussians, Dutch and Danes.

No. 3, contains a list of 47 cases, reported by the United States agent at Jamaica; concerning whom no other remark is made, than that they claimed to be citizens of the United States. I have not examined in what list of applications either the 363 or the 47 are included.

The next communication in the order of time, on the subject of impressments, is a report made to congress, March 2, 1808, in compliance with a resolution of the Senate of November 30, 1807. As this report was more than three months in preparing, satisfactory information may be expected.

No. 1, is entitled a list of impressments from American vessels into the British service, between that date and the last report made March 5, 1806. This contains a list of 697 names of impressed seamen, of whom information had been received from documents transmitted in the first instance to the department of state. It follows as a matter of course, that they are included either in that which follows, or in some other application to the British government. Of these 131 claim to be Americans without producing any proof, 29 are acknowledged to be British subjects, and 22 to be neutral aliens; the remaining 515 are said to have produced proof, that they were Americans, i. e. such proof as an American protection, managed in the manner in which they are usually conducted, is calculated to furnish. In 215 instances the impressments is dated, and in no more than 76 cases is there any mention of the place. It is not meant that these 697 impressments all took place between the dates of the dif-

ferent reports; for of the 215 which are dated, 32 took place in 1805, a number in 1803 and 1804, and two in 1798. The meaning is, that within these dates information was communicated to the department of state.

Nos. 2 to 13 inclusive, contain a series of quarterly returns of applications, with the result, the first number commencing April 10, 1806, and the last ending with September 30, 1807, both inclusive. The total of these returns is 798. Separate abstracts are given of the result for each quarter. These I have condensed into one general abstract of the whole. As there are no explicit references to a former application, I cannot ascertain what proportion is original and what a continuation of former applications. Even the frequent recurrence of the same name, furnishes but a very equivocal kind of evidence, because distinct individuals, not unfrequently, have the same name. By recurring to the dates of these impressments however, so far as any date is assigned, many of them were sufficiently early to have been contained in a former list, and the observations already made on the report of January 1805, are equally applicable to this. With the exception of 146 cases, no mention is made of the place of impressment, and of that number comparatively very few happened on the high seas, or where they could claim the protection of the American flag; and for any thing that appears, they either may or may not be Americans.—With the greatest number one important evidence of citizenship seems to be wanting, i. e. notice of the place to which they belonged. In not more than 150 instances is there any mention made of either the state, city, or town in the United States, of which they are said or supposed to be inhabitants. And with the exception of about an equal number the impressment is without date. In 102 instances, mention is made of the name of the vessel, with a designation of its national character, 56 of these were American, and 44 British vessels. One man was impressed from a French and another from a Swedish ship. There is one thing farther in this document which I find myself unable to explain. In the report of January 1805, we find applications for the release of seamen numbered from 1 to 1538. This list begins with No. 2799 leaving a chasm of 1260. To fill this chasm I can find no more than 503. The number of applications contained in the report of March 6, 1806, leaving a deficit of 757. If we add the 365 reported to the department of state, and the 47 reported by the agent at Jamaica, which on no principle of fair reckoning ought to be added, 347 will still be wanting. By what form of process the chasm between 1538 and 2799 can be filled up with 503; the only number which can fairly

be added, or even with 913, the largest number which plausible conjecture can supply, I am incompetent to explain. My first thought was that there must have been some intermediate communication to congress. But I find, on examination that there is none This report referring to that of 1806 as the last.——An abstract of the result of these applications is as follows.

Whole number of applications		798
Of these were original applications		762
Duplicate applications		36
Discharged or ordered to be discharged		272
Not on board of the ships stated		36
On board of ships on foreign stations		48
Ship not in commission on board of which said to be		2
Ship lost on board of which said to be		1
Deserted		8
Drowned		2
Invalided		2
Applications unanswered		121
Refused to be discharged,	Because they had no documents	33
	Because their documents were deemed insufficient	117
	Because they were British subjects	44
	Because they had voluntarily entered	40
	Because married in the United Kingdom	7
	Because natives of the West Indies	2
	Because a native of Africa	1
	Because exchanged as British subjects from French and Spanish prisons	3
	British subjects sent on board for mutinous conduct	3
	Because taken out of a French privateer	1
	Because said to be prisoners of war	8
	Because taken out of a smuggling vessel	1
	Because impostors with fraudulent protections	12
	Because he did not wish to quit the service	1
	Because he was a deserter	1
	No particular reason assigned	1
		798

The next report made to congress is merely an abstract of the result of applications for the release of 903 seamen. This was communicated from the department of state April 5, 1810, pursuant to a resolution of the House of Representatives of the 5th of March. I dont know that any thing more than the abstract was communicated. It is as follows.

Whole number of applications	903
Of which were original applications	873
Duplicate applications	30
Discharged or ordered to be discharged	287

Not on board the ships as stated		23
On board of ships on foreign stations		48
Stated to be in a ship not in commission		1
Referred to the transport board		1
Deserted		32
Invalided		21
Drowned		1
Applications unanswered		103
Refused to be discharged,	Because they had no documents	11
	Documents said to be insufficient	121
	Said to be natives of England or Ireland	91
	Because they had voluntarily enlisted	34
	Because married in England or Ireland	7
	Not answering the descriptions in their protections	44
	Impostors with fraudulent protections	11
	Exchanged as prisoners of war	2
	No ground to believe them Americans	3
	Said to be deserters	4
	Because totally ignorant of the United States	5
	Because taken on board privateers	5
	Protections taken from them	4
	Because taken when defrauding the revenue	2
	Because they had erased protections	2
	Sent on board by masters of vessels for mutiny	2
	Irishmen sent into the service for misdemeanors	2
	Because natives of the West Indies	3
	Do. of Africa	1
	Do. of Canada	1
	Do. of Hanover	1
		903

The last communication made to Congress on the subject of impressment was the report of January 16, 1812, pursuant to a resolution of the House of Representatives of November 29 preceding. This contains, 1st. a list of the names of seamen of whom information had been communicated in the first instance, to the department of state, since the date of the last report of March 2d 1810, this list contains 200 names, 168 of whom had produced the customary proofs of citizenship No date of impressment mentioned.

2. A detailed report of 1 58 applications in cases of impressment with the result, in 6 quarterly returns from Mr. Lyman consul at London, beginning April 1st, 1809, and ending September 30, 1810. These, like the former lists, consisted partly of new cases, and was in part the continuation of former applications, which had in the first instance, been unsuccessful. The relative proportion of these different kinds of applications cannot be distinctly ascertained. But as more than 4-5ths of the dates of those which have any date assigned are prior to the year 1810, some as early as 1797

and 1798, it may be fairly inferred that no inconsiderable number of these applications may have been preferred before 1809. In 349 cases mention is made of the places to which the parties belonged. In about the same number, and with only one or two variations the same individuals, the date of the impressment is noticed, and in 340 cases, these also of the same individuals, with only a few omissions, we are informed of the place, region, or quarter of the world in which it happened. Of these 340, only 23 are said to have been impressed at sea, and about 60 more off or near, particular coasts, capes, headlands, roads, coves, rivers and harbours, and in the channel. Of the remainder the greater part are said to be impressed at London, Liverpool, and other ports in Great Britain, and in Jamaica and the other West India islands, places where the American flag could not protect them. In 270 instances, not only the name but the national character of the ship is given, out of which they were impressed. It surely never can be pretended that the American flag should protect even our native seamen, when found on board foreign, particularly British ships. By adverting to the national character of these ships, we find impressments from American ships 158, British do 98, French do. 10, Danish 2, Swedish 2—The portion of those impressed from British, being to those impressed from American nearly 2 to 3 or 2·5ths, I find references made to former applications placed against 137 names, that number being mentioned more than once, 24 names mentioned more than twice, 11 more than three times, and three as much as 5 times. For example Daniel M. Reynold placed against No 4655 and referring back to Nos. 2725, 28. 6, 3262 and 3756. William Smith 9th placed against No. 4756 and refers to Nos. 2726. 2857. 3263. 3755. These two individuals seem to have been on board of the same ship which was on a foreign station. By means of these repetitions the apparent number exceeds the real one by 176. This list begins with No. 4500 and ends with 6057. The 200 applications made in the first instance to the department of state, added to this total makes the staring number 6257. The number 903 contained in the abstract of March 1810, of which there are no details, fills up the chasm between the close of the detailed report of April 1808, and this of 1812. Six separate abstracts are given of the same number of quarterly returns which I have condensed into one general abstract of the whole—As follows.

Whole number	1558
Duplicate applications	2
Discharged and ordered to be discharged	401
Not on board the ships stated	58
On board of ships on foreign stations	145
Ships not ascertained on board of which they are serving	51
Said to be on board of ships not in commission	5
Deserted	39
Invalided	42
Drowned, died or killed	7
Applications unanswered	6

Refused to be discharged,	Because they had no documents	167
	Because British subjects	229
	Because their documents were insufficient	183
	Because they had voluntarily enlisted	49
	Because they were not Americans	9
	Because they were deserters	12
	Because taken on board of enemy's privateers	43
	Because they had fraudulent protections	30
	Did not answer the descriptions in their protections	75
	Because married in the United Kingdom	21
	Because ignorant of the United States	5
	Exchanged as British subjects from enemy prisoners	6
	Because said to be impostors	6
	Having formerly belonged to the navy	1
	Having used the sea before being bound	1
	Because released from prison at Gottenburg by the British consul, to whom they applied for protections	3
	Protection irregular, dated May 29, in the United States and endorsed in London, June 6th following	1
	Because natives of the West Indies	14
	Do. of Sweden	2
	Do. of Africa	4
	Do of Prussia	1
	Do. of Italy	1
	No reason assigned	19
		1558

I have passed in review as briefly as possible, all the documents on the subject of impressments which have come to my hand. It is impossible to ascertain the precise number from these complicated and voluminous reports. But, so far as I have been able to collect facts, from the best data to which I had access, the number has been much overrated. Let us take the number 6257 for an example. This however is increased by the addition of 200 not properly belonging to it, not being included in any of Mr. Lyman's returns, but consisting of applications made in the first instance to the department of state, and which may have been in whole or in part released on a posterior application. But to make the most of that number, I will in the first instance admit the whole. From this deduct in the first place, for duplicate, triplicate, and quadruplicate applications, i. e. instances in which the name of the same person is numbered from twice to four and five times. 548. It is probable that the real number is much greater; but to that amount it is ascertained by indisputable evidence from the documents. Add to this 757, being an obvious excess in the enumeration, between the reports of January 1805, and of March 1808. This will leave 4952. I have found 370 instances of impressments from ships whose

national character is ascertained; of these I have found 142, nearly 2-5ths of the whole to have been from British vessels. If we add 16 to that number, being the amount of impressments from French, Swedish and Danish vessels, it will make a fraction more than 2-5ths. It is a fair inference, that where no mention is made of the name of the vessel, and where its national character is not designated, the proportion of British to American vessels will be nearly the same. Not that the number of American seamen on board British vessels is in that proportion, but from their being more liable to impressment. But instead of 2-5ths, I will estimate the impressments from British vessels at 1-3d; this will leave a balance of 3302. Of this number there have been discharged and ordered to be discharged 1524, omitting the discharges in the West Indies, in consequence of Mr. Talbot's mission; this will leave 1778.— On perusing the documents, I find 516 acknowledged to be British subjects, 568 who had no documents, 664 with documents declared to be insufficient, 281 who had entered voluntarily, who although they might afterwards wish for a discharge, the United States would not consider a refusal to release them as a cause of war, 195 with protections evidently fraudulent, deserted 95, 50 either neutral aliens or natives of the West Indies, married in Great Britain 42, prisoners of war 21, making a total of 2493, being an excess over the number 1778 of 713. But if we deduct from this amount 831, the proportion of these classes supposed to have been impressed from British vessels, it leaves 116 still unaccounted for. It may perhaps be said with truth, that part of those whose documents were deemed insufficient, were real Americans, and that the proofs ought to have been admitted. This is probably true. But when it is considered that 200 have been included in the number who did not properly belong to it, and who have been probably in part, and it may be all discharged, and that it was only in such documents as were evidently fraudulent, in which the fraud was detected, while it was in many instances so well executed as to elude discovery, and that the number who had volunteered was probably greater than it has been estimated. This will go a considerable length in balancing any number of real Americans who may be supposed to be among those whose documents were deemed insufficient. It is a consideration farther deserving notice, that, in addition to the loose manner in which protections are granted in the first instance, and the traffic in, as well as forgeries of these documents already noticed, it is at least very singular, that in cases where applicants are real Americans, neither themselves nor friends should be able to state their places of residence, or that both should be so negligent as to omit it. No evidence could be more conclusive than a well attested document of this kind. In 3894 applications, I mention that number, because in lists to that amount this information is attempted to be given, and I suppose is given in all the instances in which it was known to the department of state, it is only in 1264 cases, less than one third of the whole, that any place of residence is mentioned, and in more than half of these the information is no more precise than merely to notice the state, and in some merely

that the party belonged to the United States, a piece of evidence nearly equivalent to none at all; for if an attempt is made to prove a man the citizen of a state, it must be by pointing out the particular place or town in the state of which he is a native or an inhabitant. Whatever other reasons there may be for omitting a piece of information so important to its object, I think the most powerful one to be that the parties never had any residence in the United States. Upon a view of the whole subject, I think it at least probable that nearly and perhaps quite as many seamen have been discharged, as there have been impressed of real Americans out of American ships, although they may not be precisely the same individuals. No doubt a part of those impressed from British ships are real Americans, and I do not find many instances of such being discharged. But if Americans have voluntarily placed themselves under the British flag, I see not that their detention ought to be the ground of a national quarrel. The idea that any very great number of seamen are confined on board of British ships, does not appear to be substantiated by such facts as would be expected was it real. Although we hear of the many thousands of our impressed seamen who are suffering in these floating dungeons or hells, as they have been called, which have been multiplied to 20, and I believe even to 40 thousand; yet come to point out known individuals, it is questionable whether 100 could be designated by their names and places of abode. Where do these seamen belong? Do they belong to Boston, Salem, Marblehead, Portland, Newport, Providence, or to any other parts of New England, a part of the country which has perhaps furnished more native seamen than all the United States besides? No. Do they belong to New York New Jersey, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Norfolk, Charleston, or to any other place either in the southern or middle states? No. It is very questionable whether more than half a dozen individuals could be pointed out in either of those places. Where then in the name of common sense do they belong, if they are citizens of the United States?—We will certainly search in vain for them in Kentucky, Ohio, Tennessee, or any of the western states or territories. So many details may be considered as dry, and the perusal uninteresting. Under different circumstances this would be the case. Few are disposed to examine calculations, where a recourse to figures is necessary. But in our present situation, involved in a war, which must be disastrous, and may, in the end, prove ruinous to our best interests, on this single point, it is of importance to investigate facts, and as far as practicable, ascertain the magnitude of the evil. Having protracted this address to a much greater length than was intended, my concluding remarks will be but few. It may, however be of importance to observe, that when we were precipitated into a war for the commencement of which this was assigned as one of the principal grounds, and is now the sole cause for which it is continued, the evil was not increasing but rather diminishing. Between January 19, 1805, and March 6th 1806—363 applications were communicated to the department of state, exclusive of 47 to the agent at Jamaica. Between that date, and the second of the same month 1808, 697

applications From that date to April 5, 1810, no information. From that date to January 19, 1812, 200 applications. That Great Britain has refused to release Americans, known to be such; unless it be in the case of voluntary enlistments, marriage in Great Britain, or some other circumstance which is peculiar in their situation, does not appear in evidence. That she is in the habit of transferring impressed Americans from ship to ship, in order that applications for their release may be rendered abortive, and all enquiries about them fruitless, is shown not to be founded on fact, by the great numbers which she has released from time to time. I have not brought into this reckoning those released previous to 1804, altho' the balance detained is brought forward in the reckoning. That she has invariably refused to negotiate on the subject of impressment, is also assertion without proof. The correspondence between Lord Grenville and Mr. King, showed it to be a subject of great difficulty and delicacy, but it neither showed an entire disinclination to negotiate, nor gave ground absolutely to despair of success. From that time to 1806 I know not that there was any sincere attempt to negotiate on the subject This attempt gave no ground to despair of success Had the treaty of 1806 been ratified, there is little doubt but the informal arrangement connected with that instrument would have practically secured to both governments every thing to be wished on the subject. That treaty was contemptuously sent back by the then chief magistrate, without deigning to make the experiment, or even to submit it to the Senate, and one source of all the difficulties which have since arisen between the two nations, on that and other subjects, may be traced to that rash act. Since that period there has been no attempt at negotiation on that subject, unless it was coupling it, in a moment of irritation, with the affair of the Chesapeake, which was soon abandoned This not only failed of success, but was a means of protracting the settlement of the other difficulty to a much later period than it otherwise would have been. It has since been merged in other difficulties, and neither in the tenders made to the different belligerents during the embargo and non-intercourse, nor in the arrangement made with Mr. Erskine in 1809, was the want of an express stipulation on the subject of impressment, considered as an insurmountable obstacle to an accommodation. It must therefore seem strange that, when the evil itself is lessened, and every other ground of complaint substantially removed, it should still be considered of such magnitude as to be a sufficient cause for continuing the war. If it be said that the principle itself is a sufficient cause of war and we ought not to give up the contest before that is relinquished. Without attempting at all to discuss the question about the principle, I answer that I have no idea of going to war for an abstract principle whether it be right or wrong. A man may profess the principle that he has a right to my farm, but so long as he attempts no practical step, either legal or violent, to establish his claim I will not go to law with him. There have been many long and bloody wars between Great Britain and France, many of them on grounds sufficiently ridiculous, but I know not that any one war

was for this cause alone, that one of the Kings of Great Britain assumed, and his successors for several centuries continued to adopt the ridiculous title of King of France. Great Britain may claim the right of impressing her own subjects from on board of American vessels, or she may claim if you please, the right of impressing Americans, which by the way she has never done; but it is only in the practical exercise of that right that it can be a real grievance or a cause of war. I have hitherto said nothing about the probability of obtaining the object in pursuit by war. I believe there is none. We may take Canada and Nova-Scotia, and the Floridas into the bargain, i. e. if we can obtain them, and affairs on the ocean remain in the same state as at present, unless it be by an alteration for the worse. If ever the object is obtained or the difficulty settled it must be by amicable negotiation. Even after a war of seven years, or a longer period it must come to that at last, and whenever a disposition to meet the subject in that way is mutual, experience has shewn that, although difficult and delicate, it is not impracticable. Great Britain has an undoubted claim upon her own seamen, and we have no right either to detain or secrete them under fictitious protections. They are necessary to her national existence and independence. We have a right to have ours guarded against vexatious impressments. If we wish to secure ours, it must be by a readiness to surrender hers. Concessions must be mutual if ever peace and good understanding is to be re-established. It is idle to expect coercion to effect it. In war as well as other great national or individual undertakings, calculations ought to be made about the probable expense and risk, compared with the object to be obtained. The point in view here is the securing of a right which, in the full extent it has been claimed, will operate indiscriminately in favor of British and American sailors, and it is uncertain whether it would not prove more injurious than beneficial to our native seamen. As it respects the expense of this war, we have a good sample in what has already taken place. Should it be continued another campaign without any additional expense to what has already been authorised, it will, besides exhausting the ordinary sources of revenue, make an addition of $ 37,000,000 to our national debt, viz. 27 millions in loans and 10 ditto treasury notes. In addition to the expense, the prodigal waste of human life, and the increase of human misery necessarily attendant upon war, ought to be brought into the estimate. Hitherto our expense of blood and treasure, has not been rewarded by many laurels. These considerations have induced me to believe, that the sacrifice is infinitely too great for the object to be obtained, and that a farther prosecution of the war, now when the principal cause for which it was commenced is removed, in spite of defeat, disgrace, disaster, and a growing opposition of public sentiment against it, for an object wholly inadequate to the sacrifice to be made, and which, if it is ever obtained, must be procured in another way, is putting, the vital interests of the country at hazard without the prospect of any adequate return. On these accounts I have uniformly been opposed to the war, although that opposition has been hitherto unsuccessful. I feel however a satisfaction in the consciousness that I

have done my duty. I have taken some pains to render the above statements correct. But, being for a long time unaccustomed to figures, it is possible some mistakes may have crept in. I hope there are none of moment. Deductions and reasonings must stand or fall by their own merit. Any material error I shall with pleasure retract when pointed out. A condemnation of the whole in bulk without examination, will be suffered to pass unnoticed.—With expression of my best wishes for the prosperity and happiness of our common country, and with grateful sentiments for the repeated marks of approbation given to my feeble, though sincere endeavors to discharge the duties of my station,

I subscribe,

Your friend and fellow citizen,

SAML. TAGGART.

Washington, February 17, 1813.

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